



**Public Health Committee
March 10, 2008**

Testimony of the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society is urging your support of **HB 5863, An Act Concerning An Umbilical Cord Blood Bank For Connecticut Residents.**

Umbilical blood is an important and effective treatment method for various diseases, including cancer. The use of umbilical cord blood has been found to treat several diseases including lymphoma, leukemia, and other cancers.

There are many patients that are hopeful in utilizing the positive effects of umbilical cord blood. Transplant doctors are turning more often to umbilical cord blood as a rich source of stem cells for patients with cancer. More than 5,500 stem cell transplants used cord blood between 1989 and 2007. The new wave in transplants has given way to more options for storing umbilical cord blood. HB 5863 will create a desired option in storing umbilical cord blood.

Currently, women that choose to donate their blood for future use can pay to freeze their babies' umbilical cord blood in privately run storage banks. Those that decide to donate and store their blood are required to pay up to \$2,000 for storage, and most will never need it. As a result, many women are not choosing to store their umbilical cord blood as a form of insurance. Nationally, less than 1 percent of women then do choose this option.

The process of storing umbilical cord is similar to how bone marrow is stored and donated. Consequently, both do have similar effects on similar diseases and cancers, and there are many instances where one may be more effective than the other. The need for perfect matches can be a matter of life and death. Individuals that have the blood stored at birth will allow for - if there is a need later in their life - the ability to obtain the appropriate treatment without having to play the odds of finding a matching donor.

There are at least 21 states that have established public cord blood banks for donations. HB 5863 will allow women the ability to properly store their umbilical cord blood as form of insurance. As a result, this could save insurance costs for medical treatments and saving lives for searching for donors.

Please support this important piece of legislation for patients and donors.